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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING-LEBANON

¶1. This Travel Warning updates information on security threats and ongoing political violence in Lebanon and informs U.S. citizens of current safety and security concerns. The Department of State continues to urge that Americans avoid all travel to Lebanon. Americans who live and work in Lebanon presently should understand that they are accepting risks in remaining and should carefully consider those risks, especially those in Tripoli. This supersedes the Travel Warning for Lebanon issued on May 30, 2008.

¶2. Recent clashes in the northern city of Tripoli have resulted in more than twenty deaths and numerous injuries. Additionally, a bomb exploded next to a city bus in Tripoli on August 13, 2008 and killed fourteen people. The U.S. Embassy advises U.S. citizens against all travel to Lebanon, and recommends that U.S. citizens presently in Lebanon consider the risks of remaining, particularly in Tripoli in light of recent incidents there.

¶3. On May 7, 2008, Hizballah militants blocked the road to Rafiq Hariri International Airport. The action rendered the airport inaccessible and travelers were unable to enter or leave the country via commercial air carriers. Armed Hizballah and other opposition members proceeded to enter areas of Lebanon not traditionally under their control resulting in heavy fighting and a number of casualties. While there is now full access to the airport and widespread hostilities have subsided, the United States is concerned about Hizballah's willingness to use violence to achieve political ends with little or no warning.

¶4. The threat of anti-Western terrorist activity exists in Lebanon; groups such as Al-Qaeda and Jund al-Sham are present in the country and have issued statements calling for attacks against Western interests in the past.

¶5. U.S. citizens traveling to Lebanon or resident in Lebanon should be aware that the U.S. Embassy has limited

ability to reach all areas of Lebanon. The Embassy cannot guarantee that Embassy employees can render assistance to U.S. citizens in all areas of the country. Furthermore, in the event that the security climate in the country worsens, American citizens should be aware that they will bear the responsibility of arranging their own travel out of Lebanon. American citizens with special medical or other needs should be aware of the risks of remaining given their condition and be prepared to be treated in Lebanon if they cannot arrange for travel out of the country.

¶6. U.S. Government-facilitated evacuations such as took place in 2006 occur only when no safe commercial alternatives exist. Evacuation would be provided on a cost-recovery basis, which means the traveler must reimburse the U.S. government for the cost of the travel. The lack of valid travel documents (U.S. passport or U.S. visa, as appropriate) will slow the U.S. Embassy's ability to provide assistance. Further information on the department's role during emergencies is provided at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1212.html

¶7. Landmines and unexploded ordnance continually pose significant dangers throughout southern Lebanon, particularly south of the Litani River, as well as in areas of the country where civil war fighting was intense. More than a dozen civilians have been killed and over 100 injured by unexploded ordnance following the armed conflict in July-August 2006. Travelers should watch for posted landmine warnings and strictly avoid all areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

¶8. The Department of State considers the threat to U.S. government personnel in Beirut sufficiently serious to require them to live and work under strict security restrictions. These practices limit, and may occasionally

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prevent, access by U.S. Embassy officials to certain areas of the country. Unofficial travel to Lebanon by U.S. government employees and their family members requires prior approval by the Department of State.

¶9. The Embassy is located in Awkar, near Antelias, Beirut, Lebanon. Public access hours for American citizens are Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; however, American citizens who require emergency services outside of these hours may contact the embassy by telephone at any time. The telephone numbers are (961-4) 542-600, 543-600, and fax 544-209.

¶10. American citizens may register with the embassy online by visiting <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui> Americans are strongly encouraged to update their registration information if it is no longer current. Information on consular services and registration can also be found at <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov> or by phone at the above telephone numbers between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday local time.

¶11. Updated information on travel and security in Lebanon may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. Additional details can be found in the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Lebanon, and the Worldwide Caution, which are available on the Department's Internet website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

¶12. Minimize considered.

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